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NCSS Convention
Chicago, Illinois
November 15, 2003

A Sample Lesson (designed and presently being taught by Mr. Johnson)

- I. Background:** The Constitution Unit is of approximately four-week duration within the scope and sequence of 8th grade social studies in the Saline Schools. U.S. History (Exploration/Colonization through Reconstruction). Following this unit of study, there are constant reminders of the constitutional challenges presented throughout our early history as a nation, culminating in the greatest test of all – the Civil War. Apart from the standard historical development and basic civics-oriented content inherent in any study of this requisite subject, students appear most engaged in seeing the effects which our Founding Fathers’ profound blueprint for government has on their lives today.
- II. Overview/The Big Idea:** Our rights, established by the first ten amendments (and related subsequent changes to the Constitution) are not absolute; they are subject to interpretation by the judiciary. As justice Holmes stated: “The right to swing my fist ends where the other man’s nose begins.” In order to resolve disagreements arising from our oft-conflicting core democratic values (i.e. liberty, equality, justice, etc.); the Constitutional principles (i.e. rule of law, individual rights, separation of powers) are frequently made manifest through judicial review. While the Constitution has been dramatically tested and affected by Civil War and the amendatory process, the interpretive role of the judiciary has a most profound effect on our contemporary lives, including those of students.
- III. Objectives:**

 - Students will compare/contrast opposing views related to selected “Teens’ Rights” cases
 - Students will appreciate competing core democratic values related to such cases and the role which judicial review plays in the resolution of such disagreements
 - Students will apply and demonstrate knowledge and understanding of both the historical development and contemporary relevance of Constitutional rights
- IV. State Standards/Benchmarks:**

Strand I (Historical Perspective); CS 1,4
Strand III (Civic Perspective); CS 1,2,3,4
Strand V (Inquiry); CS 1
Strand VI (Public Discourse and Decision-Making) CS 1,2,3
Strand VII (Citizen Involvement) CS 1
- V. Assessment:**

- Arising from cases that challenge the constitutionality of legislative and executive actions, do students understand the associated conflicting points of view? Most often, these are predicated upon the clash of individual values and community values.
- Are students aware of present day challenges/cases where they (or others) have felt empowered to question the constitutionality of policy and/or decision-making?

Students will engage in debate-style preparation/presentation, with verbal and written analysis, regarding “landmark/precedent-setting” cases relevant to their “student/juvenile” status/existence. Building upon the class debates’ case studies (or selecting another relevant and contemporary rights-related issue), each student will create a Power Point presentation, which links an amendment’s historical roots and development with its current significance.

VI. The Lesson: Two 45-minute class periods (depending on how many cases are assigned, debated and/or discussed).

- A. Background: The prior lesson involved basic content review of the Bill of Rights (with Revolutionary Era “cause and effect” connections/references made to enhance understanding of the “Founders’ intent”).

Homework handout (previous day): “Teen-Related Court Cases”* Along with reading about the selected cases, students are to access an additional background/source article related to one or two of the cases (designating specific students responsible so all cases will be covered). A list of potential web site sources to access (i.e. billofrightsinstitute.org, freedomforum.org, etc.) is put on the board.

- B. Anticipatory set: (5 minutes) (Questions) Which rights/amendments were being challenged in the cases assigned for homework? In general, do you admire the student/plaintiff for “making a federal case out of it?” What degree of success was there in obtaining additional source material, relevant to the assigned cases?
- C. Breakout: (10-20 minutes) (Based upon the specific designation of cases assigned as homework), in groups of 4-6, discuss the cases, formulating arguments for both sides. Have two volunteers from each group present as summary debaters (representing “student plaintiff” and “institutional/school defendant”). (Provide note cards for slug-line arguments and supporting detail preparation.) Note: If some groups complete the task early, they should go on to discuss the other cases.
- C. Debates: (40-50 minutes, split with end of this period and start of the next) Allowing 8-10 minutes for each case, have group debaters present, followed by class response/discussion and mock vote. Inform students of the actual judicial ruling (and/or precedent set).

- D. Closure: (10-15 minutes and/or finish for homework, as needed)
Each student submits a summary statement for any case other than the one that had been assigned to him/her as homework, the night before. An addendum quote and/or bumper sticker slogan, reflecting their personal opinion on the issue/case should be included. (Provide construction paper and markers for “optional” artistic rendering.)
- E. Extension Activity/Lesson: (One 45 minute class period – and beyond)
Instructions/Direction sheet is provided for a Power Point project entitled “Carrying Over the Constitution.” Handout is read aloud, followed by question and answer session related to expectations and format. Samples from previous student projects are shown, highlighting both Constitutional content, as well as technology-related/software features. Time in the computer lab to explore potential subjects/initiate research is allowed. Return to lab, as needed (or available). Note: This project can also be produced in a hard/paper copy version. In fact, it is recommended that a paper copy of part(s) III (II, IV) be collected for proofreading/editing purposes, aiding in a more polished presentation.

*Potential Bill of Rights-related, “Teen-centered” court cases (of which a sampling is provided on the homework handout):

- I. Student press, prayer/Bible clubs, pledge of allegiance recitation, clothing/apparel as political expression, book-banning/Internet filtering
- II. Paintball/recreational gun ownership
- IV. Searches/Privacy (purse, luggage, drug tests)
- V. Student suspension/hearing rights
- VI. Minors’ rights (juvenile vs. adult criminal justice system)
- VIII. Paddling as “cruel and unusual punishment”
- IX. Peer grading